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C O N F I D E N T I A L RIYADH 001883

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/23/2018
TAGS: [PREL](#) [QA](#) [SA](#)
SUBJECT: SAUDI-QATARI COORDINATION MEETING SEALS
RECONCILIATION (AT LEAST FOR NOW)

REF: DOHA 877

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR LISA M. CARLE,
REASONS 1.4 B, D.

¶1. (C) RECONCILIATION OFFICIAL: As noted in reftel, Qatari Crown Prince Tamim led a large delegation to Riyadh December 15-17 for the first meeting of the Qatar-Saudi Joint Council on Coordination. Interior Minister Nayif stood in for Crown Prince Sultan to lead the Saudi side. (Note: Sultan is undergoing treatment for cancer in New York. End note.) Saudi press accounts reported that the discussions covered a wide range of political, military, economic bilateral issues. Of particular significance was the signing of a land and sea border protocol, completing the process of demarcating the Saudi-Qatar border that had begun earlier in the year. The draft agreement had been agreed in July when Shaikh Hamed bin Jassem al-Thani visited Jeddah. Five other agreements were also signed.

¶2. (C) GOOD WILL ABOUND: The visit the second major public event in the recent Saudi-Qatari fence mending, the first being the return of a Saudi Ambassador to Qatar in March of this year after a hiatus of six years. Shaikh Tamim held talks with Prince Nayif, a meeting described as the inaugural of the Saudi-Qatari Coordination Council. Sheikh Tamim was subsequently hosted by King Abdullah at the King,s farm outside Riyadh, with much media present. The Saudi evening news gave Sheikh Tamim,s visit prominence, including footage of the King and Sheikh Tamim lawn bowling at the farm and embracing one another upon Tamim,s departure later on the 14th.

¶3. (C) COMMENT: The Saudi message appears to be that Qatar-Saudi relations are repaired, friendly and important. The reconciliation has been made possible, from the Saudi perspective, by the recent softening of criticism of the Saudi leadership on Al-Jazeera. It was outrage over Al-Jazeera,s coverage of Saudi Arabia that prompted the recall of the Saudi ambassador in 2002.
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